

## Pamphlet, 1904

I. FARMERS' LINES. The Bell Telephone Companies.

ADEQUATE FACILITIES AT MODERATE RATES.

Louisiana Purchase Exposition.

ST. LOUIS.

1904.

1

### **The Farmer's Telephone**

It Is Becoming as Necessary as the Mowing-Machine. What the Bell Companies Are Doing to Provide Cheap and Adequate Facilities.

On the farm to-day from the breaking up of the ground through the seasons of planting, cultivating, and harvesting, the farmer does his work with the aid of machinery. He thinks of the seed drill, the cultivator, the mowing-machine, and the reaper as necessities. Without them he could not carry on his farm. Whether he is the proprietor of thousands of broad acres in the mighty West or the owner of a farm in New England he looks to the labor-saving device, the product of American inventive genius, to lighten his toil and increase his profits. The progressive farmer is quick to appreciate the value of any utility in agricultural pursuits, and of late years he has added the telephone to his list of necessities. The farmer who cannot from his house or barn talk over the wire is becoming as much of a back number as would be the man who cut his hay and grain with help of the mowing-machine and the reaper.

## Library of Congress

When reasons are given why the farmer should have a telephone, the list is a long one. It enables him to find out about the weather, and is doing more than any other thing to enhance the value of the United States signal service to people in rural communities. Dwellers in the cities find the weather predictions printed in black type on the first page of the morning paper. To nine out of ten of the people in large centers of population knowledge that the day is likely to be fair or stormy is a convenience rather than a necessity. The state of the weather makes no material difference work of the store, the office, and the factory. To the farmer, the same knowledge may mean money in his pocket. The weather is a factor of prime importance in determining the time to sow and the time to reap. If he has a telephone the ringing of a bell puts the farmer in communication with the nearest village, and he is then able to learn what the weather man has to say, and the weather man is generally right. His predictions are correct much oftener than might be supposed from the many jokes which are made at his expense.

Thanks to the telephone, farmers and fruit growers are often able to save their crops from injury by frosts. It is a regular practise among the prune growers in Idaho to receive warning by telephone when the temperature is likely to fall suddenly. Fires are then built, and these smudges, sending out a heavy smoke, often serve to prevent the frost which would otherwise, perhaps, destroy the crops. The telephone is of service to the market gardeners in a somewhat similar way to that in which it is employed by the Idaho prune raisers. In many sections garden crops are protected from frost by placing cloths over the plants and vines, and progressive farmers in these districts find that the telephone is of great assistance in enabling them to tell when they should take precautions against a fall in temperature.

Every successful farmer is a merchant as well as an agriculturist. To gain the full measure of the returns of his labor he must know when to sell his product and when it is advisable to hold it for better prices. He wants the market quotations, and he also wants to know that the figures which he gets are authentic. In certain sections of the country it was formerly

## Library of Congress

a common practise to send out as buyers of farm produce men who were in the class with Ananias when the prices which they quoted to the men of whom they bought were compared with the market quotations. The farmers, living miles from the nearest village, had no means of detecting the fraud, but the oily-tongued traveler no longer tells his fairy stories about prevailing prices. He knows that the telephone has put the farmer in touch with the market. And when the American farmer understands the situation he is abundantly able to look out for himself in a business transaction.

It is better to send to market goods which are already sold than it is to take there those for which a purchaser must be found. In parts of the cotton-growing regions small planters take their crops to "the wagon market," sometimes driving for many miles to reach the towns where the sales are made. Prices are often found to be unsatisfactory, and the cotton must be sacrificed or carried back to the farms. The man who made five trips with several bales of cotton before he

The Farmer's Home and Telephone Line. 3

4 got his price might have gone to market but once if he had been at the end of a telephone line.

The market gardener who sells the product of his farm in the nearby city owes much to the telephone. It is no longer necessary for him to start in the dead of night that he may have time to interview the buyers in the early morning. Instead, he makes his bargain by telephone, and a boy delivers the goods if the farmer does not want to go to the market himself. The farmer raising vegetables for the market, by following prices closely, increases his profits, for he knows when to sell to the best advantage, and by modern methods he is able to hasten or retard the ripening of his garden crops.

In other ways, almost innumerable, the telephone has come to the assistance of the farmer. By its use he can arrange for the extra help needed in the harvest time. It calls the doctor in cases of accident or illness, and summons assistance when fire breaks out. It

## Library of Congress

acts as guardian of the peace and is a terror to evil-doers, who know that wherever they go through the country districts they are never far beyond its reach.

Distances are long on the farm. Here, as in the cities, the telephone may be put to many and diverse uses, in addition to its chief purpose of maintaining communication with the outside world. It is practicable for the farmer without leaving his house to talk with the men in the distant harvest field. His dwelling may be connected with his barns and granaries and these with all portions of his lands. Such uses are to-day made of the telephone, and they are destined to increase, just as the purposes to which the telephone is put in the cities are being enormously enlarged.

While the telephone is of inestimable value to the farmer as a help in his business, to no class of the people does it bring more of pleasure and recreation than to the dwellers in country districts. In many sections of the country the question of finding means to keep the boys and girls on the farm is constantly and anxiously debated. Link the farm to the outside world by means of the telephone and the wires will serve to bind the sons and daughters to the old home. The telephone takes from the farmer's family its sense of loneliness and isolation, especially in the long winter months. Largely through its influence will disappear the pathos and

### The Farmer. 5

6 tragedy of the lives of such women as have been portrayed by Mary E. Wilkins, Kate Douglass Wiggin, Sarah Orne Jewett and other writers of the same school. The telephone is chief among many things which the farmer of to-day is employing to give him the comforts and conveniences enjoyed by the man in the city, in addition to the freedom and delight which the country alone affords.

It was in the West that the farmers first realized the extent to which the telephone could be made to serve them. Conservative New England and other Eastern sections were not so quick were not so quick to grasp the idea, but in recent years there has been an

## Library of Congress

awakening on the subject, and in all sections of the land the farmers' telephone lines will soon be equally distributed. Obviously, the business of providing telephone facilities must be conducted on a different basis in the country than in the large towns and cities.

In many cases it is to the advantage of the farmer to lend a hand in building the telephone line. He and his neighbors have much of the material. It is easy to form a club and begin operations. One man contributes from his wood lot trees to make the poles; another supplies oak or other hard wood for the cross-arms; even the pins on which the insulators are placed are made from wood cut on the farms. Men who do not contribute material send their teams to do the hauling, and others set the poles and string the wires. The pole line is in place before it is necessary to spend a dollar. Only the instruments and the wire remain to be procured.

If expert advice and assistance are wanted, officers and employees of the nearest Bell Company will gladly supply them. It is not uncommon to see, for example, a lineman in the employ of a Bell Company working with a group of farmers who are building their own telephone lines. Some of the lines built by farmers in this way would do credit to a construction crew made up of men of long experience in the work. Farmers take pride in their telephone systems. They select good poles and see that they stand straight and firm, and they keep the lines in repair. Farmers are ingenious. In the Middle West they have built many telephone lines without the use of the ordinary poles. The wires are carried on scantling spiked to the fence posts, which are of red cedar and firmly planted.

When a farmers' line is completed its users show good

The Farmer's Daughter. 7

8 judgment in employing it to the best advantage. The working day is long on the farm and telephone business is not crowded into six or eight hours as it is in the cities. This makes it possible for a large number of persons to use the same wires and, consequently, the work and expense of keeping the line and apparatus in working order are divided into small

## Library of Congress

parts. The switchboard is often placed in a farmhouse and operated by members of the family. No people in the United States are so well able to secure good telephone service at low cost as are the dwellers on the six million farms.

There are thriving telephone companies in this country which are the outgrowth of farmers' telephone lines built originally by the farmers themselves to put them in touch with one another and the nearby market towns. So successful were these lines that they were extended and telephones added until the business reached a point where a company was formed and a regular exchange established. Sometimes the work of building lines has been largely under the direction from the first of some energetic man, and he has become the manager of the company when it became desirable to have one. Such a man, enjoying the confidence of his friends and neighbors, knows their wants and habits and how to make the service suited to the locality. When he begins business the lines center, perhaps, at his house. As he adds to the plant, the time comes when he can open a regular exchange, but he is able to conduct it more economically than an outsider would be. Very likely he makes arrangements with the village bank to receive payments from his patrons, thus saving the expense of a collector. Knowing the people for miles around, the manager easily finds a man of mechanical skill who will be glad to devote a part of his time to keeping the instruments in order. In much the same way arrangements are made for repairs upon the lines. The manager of such a telephone enterprise also makes arrangements to connect its lines with the general telephone system of the country, increasing the opportunities offered its customers and giving it a share in long distance business.

The Bell Telephone Companies look with favor upon the building of telephone lines by farmers. The managers of the Bell system are ready to aid in the work and to enter

The Farmers' Exchange. The Switchboard is in the Village Drug Store. 9

## Library of Congress

10 into business relations with the farmers' clubs and companies, the Bell lines connecting each local system with the outer world, and the owners of each local plant conducting it in their own way.

Several plans have been devised by the Bell Companies to meet the needs of the man on the farm and give him access to lines covering, not only his immediate neighborhood, but reaching 50,000,000 people in the country at large. For instance, farmers may form a club or association and the Bell Companies will cooperate to make their efforts a success, furnishing instruments and providing service at a nominal price, connecting the line built by the farmers themselves with the larger system at a point agreed upon. Or, farmers may form a corporation to do business in territory where there is not already telephone service; building and maintaining the line, owning and operating the switchboard and using standard telephone instruments which will assure good connections to the country store or the market city, or to any point in the whole country. The lines of the local concern are thus made part of the comprehensive Bell system, an advantage which cannot be secured by any local company. If the people of a locality do not want to go into business for themselves through the medium of a club or corporation of their own, they may, under other plans, secure the extension of the Bell lines to their farms and villages, and thus become numbered among the million and a half subscribers to the system.

The plan which the Bell Companies have adopted for the erection of farmers' lines welcomes and invites the cooperation of the farmers themselves. To bring telephone service to its highest efficiency there must be recognition of the fact that this can be secured only through the creation of a single national system, but this does not mean that the people are to be deprived of a voice in the management of this greatest of public utilities. In the American Union each State has the management of its own affairs. It is supreme in its sphere. Certain broad powers are reserved to the central government. The Bell Telephone system's methods furnish in the industrial world a striking parallel to that which is regarded as the highest type of government. The farmers' companies allied with the Bell system, while they manage their own affairs, become integral parts of the general

## Library of Congress

scheme, enjoying the many benefits which come from connection with the organization to which is due the perfection of modern telephony.

The further extension of the farmers' telephone line now about all that remains to be done until practically the 80,000,000 people in this great country will be living at the end of telephone wires. According to the telephone engineers the day is not far distant when this condition which, to the average man seems like a dream, will be an accomplished fact. Already towns and cities are connected by mighty system. It remains to include the country districts; and the farmers' clubs and companies allied with the universal system of the Bell Companies are destined to play an important part in bringing this to pass. 11

This little girl went to market.

This little girl stayed at home.